

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A machine readable symbol, comprising:  
a data field comprised of a plurality of data cells, each data cell being  
5 assigned a color corresponding to a data pattern value, a finder pattern value or  
an overlapping data pattern value and finder pattern value;  
wherein a finder pattern is discernable when the symbol is subjected to  
a first color filter means; and  
wherein a data pattern is discernable when the symbol is subjected to  
10 a second color filter means.
2. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the first color filter means comprises  
a first color illumination source.
- 15 3. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the second color filter means  
comprises a second color illumination source.
4. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the first color filter means comprises  
a first color filter through which the symbol is viewed.  
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5. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the second color filter means  
comprises a second color filter through which the symbol is viewed.
6. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the first color filter means comprises  
25 an electronic device adapted to process the symbol image in accordance with a  
first color filter.
7. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the second color filter means  
comprises an electronic device adapted to process the symbol image in  
30 accordance with a second color filter.
8. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the data cells are arranged into a  
matrix defining a rectilinear data field.
9. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the color assigned to at least one of  
the plurality of data cells is in the visible light spectrum.

10. The symbol of claim 1, wherein the color assigned to at least one of the plurality of data cells is in the invisible light spectrum.

11. The symbol of claim 10, wherein the assigned color is in the infrared or ultraviolet light spectrum.

12. The symbol of claim 1, wherein at least one data cell is assigned a color corresponding to an overlapping data pattern value and finder pattern value.

13. The symbol of claim 12, wherein each data cell is assigned a color corresponding to an overlapping data pattern value and a finder pattern value.

14. The symbol of claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of data cells is assigned a color corresponding to multiple data pattern values.

15. The symbol of claim 14, wherein each data cell is assigned a color corresponding to multiple data pattern values.

16. The symbol of claim 1, wherein each data cell is assigned a binary value corresponding to a data pattern value or a finder pattern value.

17. A machine readable symbol, comprising:  
a data field comprised of a plurality of data cells, each data cell being assigned a color corresponding to a data pattern value or a finder pattern value, or an overlapping data pattern value and finder pattern value, wherein at least a subplurality of the data cells are assigned an overlapping data pattern value and finder pattern value;

wherein a finder pattern is discernable when the symbol is subjected to a first color filter by viewing the symbol through a first color filter, exposing the symbol to a first color light source, or utilizing an electronic device to process the symbol image in accordance with a first color filter; and

wherein a data pattern is discernable when the symbol is subjected to a second color filter by viewing the symbol through a second color filter, exposing the symbol to a second color light source, or utilizing an electronic device to process the symbol image in accordance with a second color filter.

18. The symbol of claim 17, wherein each data cell is assigned a color corresponding to an overlapping data pattern value and a finder pattern value.

19. The symbol of claim 17, wherein the color assigned to each data cell is either in the visible or invisible light spectrum.

20. The symbol of claim 17, wherein at least a subplurality of the data cells are assigned a color corresponding to a finder pattern value and multiple data pattern values.

21. The symbol of claim 17, wherein at least a subplurality of the data cells are assigned a color corresponding to multiple data pattern values.

22. The symbol of claim 17, wherein the data pattern values and finder pattern values comprise a binary value.

23. A method for creating and reading a machine readable symbol, comprising the steps of:

creating a data field having a plurality of data cells;

assigning a data pattern value at least some of the data cells;

assigning a finder pattern value to at least some of the data cells, wherein at least one data cell is assigned an overlapping finder pattern value and a data pattern value;

5 assigning a color to each data cell, the color corresponding to the data pattern value, the finder pattern value, or an overlapping data pattern value and finder pattern value;

subjecting the symbol to a first filter to discern a finder pattern; and

subjecting the symbol to a second filter to discern a data pattern.

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24. The method of claim 23, wherein the first filter subjecting step comprises viewing the symbol through a first color filter, exposing the symbol to a first color light source or using an electronic device to process the symbol image in accordance with a first color filter.

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25. The method of claim 23, wherein the second filter subjecting step comprises viewing the symbol through a second color filter, exposing the symbol to a second color light source or using an electronic device to process

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the plurality of data cells are arranged into a matrix defining a rectilinear data field.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein the assigning data pattern value  
5 step comprises assigning a binary value to at least a subplurality of data cells.

28. The method of claim 23, wherein the assigning finder pattern value step comprises assigning a binary value to at least a subplurality of data cells.

10 29. The method of claim 23, including the step of determining the location of symbol damage using a color filter.